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Convention on the Rights of the Child

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**Committee on the Rights of the Child**
**Seventy-second session**

**Summary record of the 2116th meeting**
Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 24 May 2016, at 3 p.m.

*Chair*: Mr. Mezmur

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*The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.*

**Consideration of reports of States parties** (*continued*)

*Combined third to fifth periodic reports of Slovakia* (CRC/C/SVK/3-5, CRC/C/SVK/Q/3-5 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Slovakia took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Mr. Rosocha** (Slovakia), introducing the combined third to fifth periodic reports of Slovakia (CRC/C/SVK/3-5), said that, since the submission of its report in 2013, Slovakia had significantly modified several of the measures described there and had put new ones in place. The foundation of the implementation framework for the Convention was provided by the National Strategy for the Protection of Children against Violence and the National Coordination Centre for Resolving the Issues of Violence against Children, which applied the vital principle of coordination and engagement of the widest possible range of stakeholders, including regional and local government and civil society. Furthermore, the general principle of the best interests of the child had been established as the primary consideration in decision-making in all matters concerning children. A non-exhaustive list of the criteria to be considered, including children's own views, had been drawn up for use in determining what was in the child's best interests in each case.

3. In order to protect the right to life, survival and health, police were now authorized to order an abusive person to stay away from a dwelling that was shared with the victim of the abuse for 10 days whereas, previously, such a person could be kept away only for 48 hours. The repeated commission of a misdemeanour against a close and trusted person had been made a criminal offence. In addition, the authorities responsible for the social and legal protection of children were now empowered to enter a child's home if the condition of the child could not otherwise be verified.

4. Slovakia was pursuing the process of deinstitutionalization both through legislation on alternative care and by means of practical measures. The family environment was preferred to alternative care of any kind. The various forms of care were ranked in order of preference and quality, and expert assistance was called on to help keep families together if at all possible. Where alternative care was required, the possibility of returning the child to parental care was evaluated on a regular basis.

5. Slovakia had been working to put into effect the recommendations made by the Committee in its concluding observations on its initial report on the implementation of the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (CRC/C/OPSC/SVK/CO/1). Government departments, other entities such as the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government for Roma Communities, regional and local government bodies, NGOs and schools had all been involved in that effort. Some of the recommendations, including those regarding awareness-raising and prevention activities, were underpinned by related instruments such as the National Action Plan for Children, the National Strategy for the Protection of Children against Violence, the National Action Plan for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and the Strategy on the Prevention of Crime and Other Antisocial Activities. Monitoring mechanisms to permit the early identification of potential victims were also being put in place, and close attention was paid to risk factors associated with people's economic situation or migration status. The police were required to follow special procedures in order to protect victims' rights and best interests. The new Act on Criminal Liability of Legal Persons, due to enter into force on 1 July 2016, established the direct liability of legal persons for such criminal offences as human trafficking and the production, distribution and possession of child pornography.

6. Similar steps were being taken to act upon the recommendations made by the Committee in its concluding observations on the initial report of Slovakia on the implementation of the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict (CRC/C/OPAC/SVK/CO/1). Measures had been introduced, as recommended by the Committee, to support the early identification of children who might have been involved in armed conflicts, although no such cases had yet been detected. As to the Committee's recommendation that the State party should consider enacting legislation on the criminal liability of private military and security services and companies, Slovakia had no information about the existence of any private military services, but the provision of private security services was regulated by law; the minimum age for employment in such companies was 18.

7. The State party supported training for professionals in subject areas such as child interviewing methods, the procedures to be followed when handling cases of child abuse and neglect, and the prevention of institutional violence and secondary victimization. Cooperation between the State and NGOs, both in terms of policy and on the ground, continued to evolve. As to international cooperation, Slovakia had acceded to the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, which was due to enter into force for Slovakia on 1 July 2016.

8. The Slovak Republic was aware of the slow pace of progress in areas such as integrated data collection and the tracking of budget resources for the promotion and protection of children's rights. The delays that had arisen in that respect had to be viewed in the context of ongoing legislative and institutional challenges that required protracted negotiation and the development of appropriate measures over the long term.

9. **Ms. Aldoseri** (Country Task Force) said that she would like to know why the post of Deputy Prime Minister for Human Rights and National Minorities had been abolished in 2012. The State party had given human rights top priority, and a measure of that kind could send the wrong message. She would appreciate clarification as to whether the Ministerial Committee for Children or regional and municipal governments were responsible for implementing the 2009-2012 National Action Plan for Children. She would also be interested to learn which body was responsible for monitoring the implementation of the updated plan for the period 2013-2017 and what results had been achieved thus far. She would like to know what body bore the chief responsibility for monitoring the observance of children's rights and whether it worked in accordance with the Paris Principles. She would also like to know who was responsible for taking follow-up action on reports on children's rights issued by the Public Defender of Rights (Ombudsperson). Information on the investigation carried out into the allegations of abuse of power by the Children's Commissioner would be welcome.

10. She was concerned at the fact that the tracking of resources allocated for the implementation of children's rights — the most important part of the mandate of the Action Plan for Children — appeared to have been deferred. She would like to know what the Government's reasoning was in that regard.

11. Was there any strategy in place for ensuring that all children in all schools were aware of the Convention? If so, was there a particular focus on issues relating to vulnerable and marginalized children? Had monitoring activities undertaken in connection with the Anti-Discrimination Act yielded results in terms of the protection of such children from hate speech? She would like to know whether training courses for persons who worked with children included a module designed to raise awareness of the provisions of the Convention.

12. She was interested in learning more about the role played by civil society in the State party's reporting process and in the protection of children's rights in general. Were

such organizations viewed as partners in the implementation of the Committee's recommendations, for example?

13. A district court's acquittal of police officers charged with physically assaulting Roma children had recently been overturned. What measures had been put in place to prevent a recurrence of acts of that sort and to expedite investigations of such rights violations? She would like to know how the State party was working to improve cooperation between the police and the Roma communities and whether there was a budget for that effort. She also wondered how the State party guaranteed impartiality in Ministry of the Interior investigations into police brutality.

14. She would appreciate information on the legal proceedings taken against persons who had performed forced sterilizations of Romani women and on the compensation being provided to victims. What steps were being taken to adopt standards designed to ensure that sterilization was performed only on the basis of free, prior informed consent?

15. The recent amendment to the Family Code had not included a prohibition of corporal punishment in the family setting, where "reasonable physical punishment" was still tolerated. When did the State party intend to amend the Code to explicitly prohibit corporal punishment in all settings? In view of the underreporting of violence against children, especially sexual violence, she would appreciate information on the training provided to persons working with children on how to recognize the signs of such violence or abuse. A prevailing lack of coordination in cases of sexual abuse meant that victims were compelled to tell their disturbing story over and over again, which ultimately led many to withdraw their charges. She would like to know what plans the State party had to introduce appropriate procedures for dealing with such cases. How many crisis centres were available to help victims? Were they accredited and monitored by the State and were they able to provide quality services?

16. The general atmosphere of intolerance towards minority ethnic and religious groups had been exacerbated by the official announcement, made at the start of the current wave of migration, that Muslim refugees would not be admitted. Such intolerance could trigger a violent reaction, and she wondered how the State party planned to promote greater tolerance in order to reduce that risk.

17. **Ms. Winter** (Country Task Force) said that she would like to know whether there were any agreements between the Government and the large international industrial companies operating in Slovakia to ensure a healthy environment for children living in the vicinity of industrial installations.

18. **Ms. Oviedo Fierro** (Country Task Force) said that the State party had numerous legal and policy instruments at its command for combating discrimination, but they appeared to have yielded scant results. Had the State party considered arranging for independent monitoring of the enforcement of the Anti-Discrimination Act, for example, in order to establish whether violators had been brought to justice and, if so, what penalties had been imposed? Only with data on the outcomes of the various strategies could the Committee evaluate the State party's determination to put an end to discrimination. The Committee was particularly concerned about de facto discrimination against children and adolescents. There was evidence that Roma children were routinely placed in special schools designed to cater to children with disabilities or in completely separate, lower-quality schools. She would like to know what the State party had done to address that type of discrimination. In the health sector, too, members of the Roma community encountered segregation, and she would appreciate some examples of how the State party was dealing with that problem. Roma and Hungarian families apparently did not always receive the family allowances provided to many families in Slovakia, and she wondered in what way they failed to meet the eligibility requirements for those subsidies.

19. The concept of the child's best interests as expressed in Slovak law often appeared to be taken to mean the interests of whoever was using the term, whether political or religious leaders, members of the media or some other party. The concept of a "stable family", for example, which was used in the context of the best interests of the child, was defined as comprising a mother and a father, which meant that families that did not fit that description risked being marginalized and discriminated against.

20. A study had been undertaken by Slovakia in 2012 for the Council of Europe which had presented two important conclusions on the subject of children's right to have their voices heard. The first was that it was necessary to develop measures to enforce the rights of the child across all areas. The second was that action needed to be taken to ensure that children's voices were heard in a range of different forums. The Committee would like to know what steps had been taken by the State party to achieve those objectives. The study had also highlighted the fact that many adults who worked with children were not sufficiently aware of the rights of children. What was the State party doing to rectify that situation? The Committee would like to know more about the participatory model being used for the work of the Committee for Children and Young People. School parliaments were another structure that had been formally established in the State party to foster the participation of children in decision-making, but, unfortunately, it seemed that participation was quite limited. Was that indeed the case?

21. The Committee would like to know if the Roma language and other minority languages were used in schools. Information had been received by the Committee which indicated that cyberbullying took place both between students and between teachers and students. Were measures being put in place to encourage people to report cases of cyberbullying and to tackle the problem? More broadly, had the State party carried out awareness-raising and training campaigns to encourage young people and their parents to use social media and the Internet in a safe and responsible manner? Information had been received by the Committee which indicated that there was a lack of trust in the effectiveness of the Child Security telephone hotline. That was a concern for the Committee given the importance of such a service. Was the State party taking steps to resolve that issue?

22. **Mr. Kotrane** said that, while the State party's legislation generally complied with the Convention, some specific laws did not. An example was the definition of a "stable family" that was used in the Family Code. In cases where there were inconsistencies between domestic legislation and the Convention, could judges directly invoke the Convention? Did the Convention take precedence over national law?

23. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** said that, although progress had been made, the State party still had some difficulties in collecting reliable data. In particular, disaggregated data systems were not available in all fields. The Committee would like to know more about the progress made in developing such systems.

24. The State party's report had not provided any information on freedom of expression, association or religion. The Committee would thus appreciate an update on the exercise of those freedoms by children and young people, especially with reference to associations for young people. Were all children, including Roma children and children with disabilities, given the opportunity to participate in youth associations?

*The meeting was suspended at 3.50 p.m. and resumed at 4.10 p.m.*

25. **Mr. Dobrovodský** (Slovakia) said that Slovakia was one of the few countries in Europe to have included a specific reference to the principle of the best interests of the child in its domestic legislation. Following consultations with the Austrian Government, and taking into consideration the Committee's general comment No. 14 on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration (CRC/C/GC/14), it had been decided that the best interests of the child should be explicitly incorporated into

article 5 of the Family Code. Some judges in Slovakia had previously expressed the view that a child's exposure to indirect violence, such as violence perpetrated by one parent against the other parent, should not be considered as violence against the child. However, again inspired by the Austrian model, the Government had decided to pass legislation designed to ensure that children were able live in a safe environment free of violence by criminalizing indirect violence against a child. Thus, although the Family Code did not specifically prohibit corporal punishment, the legal framework, taken as a whole, provided adequate protection for children against domestic violence. Numerous articles in the Family Code provided for the protection of the dignity of children, the safety and stability of the environment in which they lived and their right to mental and psychological development.

26. In the Slovak legal system, parents' discretion in exercising their authority over their children and in determining appropriate methods of discipline had been reduced to a minimum. As had been recognized by the Committee in its general comment No. 8 on the right of the child to protection from corporal punishment (CRC/C/GC/8), adults were generally able to distinguish between a "protective physical action and a punitive assault". Therefore, parents were able to exercise a certain degree of power and authority in educating their children, but they were not permitted to abuse their children or use physical violence to punish them. The Government believed that the legislative measures in place were sufficient to prevent corporal punishment and the physical abuse of children.

27. **Ms. Winter** said that it appeared that it would be a straightforward undertaking to simply introduce a single line in the Criminal Code to prohibit corporal punishment in all settings. The Committee would like to know why that had not been done.

28. **Mr. Molin** said that the latest amendments to the Act on Misdemeanors had made any physical violence against a child an offence. In the case of repeated instances of physical violence, the offence would be considered to have been committed with aggravating circumstances.

29. **Mr. Dobrovodský** (Slovakia) said that his Government continued to monitor the implementation of those legislative amendments. It was also legally required to monitor adherence to the principle of the best interests of the child in court judgments. In the coming years, comprehensive statistics would become available, and an evaluation of the situation based on those statistics would be submitted to the Committee in the State party's next report.

30. The definition set forth in the Family Code of what constituted a stable family notwithstanding, Slovakia did not discriminate against non-traditional families; on the contrary, the Government was required under the Code to protect all types of families. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 64/142 on guidelines for the alternative care of children, the intention was to underscore the importance of a child's biological family and, wherever possible, to enable the child to remain in or return to the care of his or her parents.

31. The Government had endeavoured to act upon the recommendations made in the Committee's concluding observations on the State party's preceding report (CRC/C/SVK/CO/2). For example, each district court now had an assistant who was responsible for non-judicial issues, as well as a psychologist who worked with families and provided therapy as required. During the upcoming process involved in amending the Family Act, the Government would also take into consideration the Committee's recommendations.

32. A bill had been proposed the preceding year which would strengthen the involvement of the general public and civil society in the legislative process. In any case, before any bill could be submitted to the legislature, the corresponding government ministry had to inform the public of its intention to do so and hold open consultations. For

example, as part of the process involved in amending the Family Code, a number of workshops and conferences had been organized so that the public and non-governmental organizations could take part in the drafting process.

33. **Ms. Oviedo Fierro** said that the Committee would like to learn more about the draft amendments to the Family Code, especially with regard to the definition of a "stable family". It was essential that all types of families should be recognized and supported. Consideration had to be given to the legal and practical implications of including such a concept in the Family Code.

34. **Mr. Dobrovodský** (Slovakia) said that the term "stable family" had symbolic value and expressed the Government's belief that a child should not be removed from his or her biological family. The State endeavoured to assist and support all families. The courts frequently recommended educational measures and family therapy in order to resolve issues that threatened families' stability. The Family Code had been amended in order to give the courts greater flexibility in terms of the programmes and measures to which they could have recourse in order to help families to address the problems that they were facing.

35. **Ms. Oviedo Fierro** said that the Committee's concern about the concept of a "stable family" had to do with the fact that it might prompt a judge to compare one family to another in certain types of proceedings and determine that one was more "stable" than another. In such cases, there would be a risk of the outcome of such proceedings being unfair or inappropriate.

36. **The Chair** said that he would like to suggest that the delegation should return to the issue of the Family Code and the concept of a stable family at a later stage in the dialogue.

37. **Mr. Molin** (Slovakia) said that the Committee for Children and Young People of the Government Council for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality was the body primarily responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Convention in Slovakia. Committee members included representatives of public institutions and civil society organizations. The Committee was also responsible for the National Action Plan for Children 2013-2017, which had been developed with the help of children's focus groups.

38. The Office of the Children's Commissioner had been established as an independent body charged with monitoring the implementation of the Convention. The Commissioner, who had extensive powers, was elected by and reported to the National Council, the country's parliament. The Children's Commissioner Act had been drafted in such a way as to ensure that the Office functioned in accordance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles). The Children's Commissioner joined other public authorities and NGOs in working to raise awareness of children's rights. Thematic awareness campaigns focused on issues addressed in specific sections of the Convention. In that connection, a campaign to raise awareness of violence against children and children's rights was a priority of the Government for the coming four years. A crucial recent development was the adoption of the National Strategy for the Protection of Children against Violence.

39. To prevent secondary victimization, the procedural rights of victims had been strengthened, and appropriate training was given to a broad range of persons working with child victims of violence. Outreach efforts had been made to ensure that children knew where to turn if they were victims of violence. Toll-free hotlines had been set up, and State-subsidized online counselling was provided by NGOs. Slovakia had ratified the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse.

40. **Ms. Winter** asked whether the Commissioner referred to by Mr. Molin was the person who was under investigation for abuse of authority.

41. **Mr. Molin** (Slovakia) said that he was unaware of any such investigation of the Children's Commissioner.

42. **Mr. Kovács** (Slovakia) said that anyone in Slovakia who learned of a violation of a child's rights was required to report it to the authorities. Reports, which could be made anonymously, were received around the clock. All reports were examined, and the necessary measures were taken. Coordination had once been insufficient, especially in the area of protection from violence, but it had since improved considerably. A handbook on identifying victims of child abuse and neglect had been drafted in consultation with civil society and academia.

43. Any NGO that wished to set up a crisis centre was required to obtain accreditation from the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. The committee that examined applications for accreditation included representatives of NGOs and other relevant institutions. Ministry officials were in the minority. The procedure involved a review of the organization's plans for the proposed crisis centre and of the credentials of its prospective staff. Such centres could be overseen by any of a variety of public or private institutions, including law enforcement agencies. Measures had been taken to ensure that social workers were trained to interview children and identify their best interests. All interviews with children were recorded, and those recordings could be requested by the courts.

44. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** said that she wished to know whether children were sufficiently aware of how to protect themselves from violence and how to report violence or abuse. Were the relevant national institutions and the justice system accessible to children?

45. **Mr. Mikloši** (Slovakia) said that 300 health assistants of Roma background had been hired as part of a project launched by the Ministry of Health in 2014. As a result, members of Roma communities had shown a greater willingness to undergo medical examinations. The Ministry had recently issued a generally binding order regarding the procedure to be used to obtain a person's informed consent for sterilization. Consent forms translated into the languages of the country's national minorities had been annexed to the ministerial order. Bone tests, which involved an X-ray of the forearm, were used to estimate the age of people whose date of birth was unknown.

46. **Ms. Vermešová** (Slovakia) said that, while it did not relate directly to the bullying of Roma children by police in Košice, the Minister of Justice had issued an order clarifying the regulations on the protection of personal liberty to be followed by railway and regular police officers. An order dealing with the recording of police operations had also been issued. Human rights courses were a regular feature of police training at both the secondary and post-secondary levels. Senior community relations officers assisted the units that patrolled areas populated by marginalized groups, including the Roma, in particular. There were currently more than 250 such officers, most of them in the central and eastern parts of the country. Their work involved liaison activities, communication with NGOs and outreach.

47. **Ms. Tomková** (Slovakia) said that the curricula had been amended to include education in children's and human rights in the country's primary and secondary schools. Those modules covered the Convention. The number of teacher-training programmes or workshops on human or children's rights had increased considerably in recent years.

48. The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport had been involved in drafting laws to combat segregation and discrimination. A section of the Schools Act had been amended to prohibit the placement in special education of children whose lack of preparation was a result of their upbringing in socially disadvantaged communities. The Ministry had also released two recent sets of guidelines on the inclusion of children from such communities in mainstream schools. Those guidelines provided information on the amendment to the School Act and on the procedures to be followed by psychologists in

assessing children's educational needs. Desegregation and equal access to primary education for children from marginalized communities were priorities. The measures taken to reduce the placement of children from marginalized backgrounds in special schools included enlarging existing classrooms and building additional classrooms in mainstream primary schools. Funding for such projects was given to the schools where the need was greatest.

49. **Mr. Hero** (Slovakia) said that, in 2015, the Slovak police had begun to receive training in how to prevent and combat discrimination against the Roma community based on the relevant Council of Europe guidelines. A workshop on that subject had also been organized for lawyers. A specialized police unit had been set up with the aim of reducing tensions between the Roma community and the majority population. Moreover, the Government had introduced Roma civil patrols in an effort to reduce crime and to maintain living standards in Roma settlements. The authorities of the municipalities concerned had said that the initiative had yielded positive results.

50. Programmes to promote the inclusion of Roma children in mainstream education included the programme run by the Methodology and Pedagogy Centre, which was aimed at raising the attendance rate of Roma children in certain primary schools, and the National Programme for Inclusive Education, one of whose objectives was to reduce the number of Roma children being erroneously placed in special schools. Under that programme, special teams made up of the principal of the school concerned, the school psychologist, education experts and teachers had been set up to ensure inclusiveness in primary school admissions. The programme had boosted the number of Roma children attending mainstream primary schools. The Government intended to further the development of its framework for the inclusion of Roma children in mainstream education in the future.

51. In the past, the Government had taken action against a primary school found to have unlawfully segregated Roma children. Following the Government's intervention, the primary school had corrected that practice. Now that schools had greater freedom to design their own curricula, a number of schools had opted to introduce new subjects, such as the Roma language, and the Government had provided primary and secondary schools with special assistance in developing a methodology for teaching that language. It was currently being taught in two primary schools and five secondary schools. However, the Government continued to face a number of challenges in its attempts to mainstream the teaching of the Roma language in Slovakia, such as the current shortage of qualified teachers. It was considering the possibility of introducing a course on Roma studies in universities as a means of remedying that shortfall.

52. **Ms. Oviedo Fierro** asked why the State party, after having reviewed its incubator programme, which afforded parents the possibility of abandoning newborn children in incubators outside hospitals, had decided not to discontinue it, despite the fact that it violated the rights of those children. It would be useful to receive additional information on the various alternative care institutions in which children who were not in crisis could be placed, including the number of children currently residing in such institutions. She also wished to know more about the State party's approach to the implementation of the United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children. The Committee continued to harbour concerns about the State party's practice of removing children from their family and placing them in institutional care because the family was living in poverty. She would like to know in what other circumstances children could be removed from their families and placed in an alternative care institution and how long children tended to stay in such institutions. Were there mechanisms whereby children could participate in decision-making processes concerning them and report acts of abuse committed in such institutions? What steps had the State party taken to enhance the protection against abuse and ill-treatment afforded to children residing in alternative care institutions? Were adolescents residing in

such institutions provided with education and training that would enable them to become productive members of society?

53. It would also be helpful to receive statistics on the number of children who had been taken out of institutions and returned to their families. She would appreciate information about the criteria used to select the "professional families" who hosted children who had been placed in institutional care and would like to know whether there was a mechanism in place for monitoring the situation of those children. Were host families provided with guidance and technical support before assuming that role? Given that Roma children accounted for the majority of children placed in institutional care in Slovakia, she would be interested to know whether alternative care institutions employed staff who were Roma themselves or who knew the Roma language and understood the Roma culture. She asked whether the State party had taken any steps to facilitate the adoption of Roma children. Lastly, she wished to invite the delegation to provide an overview of the measures taken to promote positive parenting techniques and to provide parents in need with the necessary psychological and financial support.

54. **Ms. Aldoseri** said that she wondered how the State party would be able to assess the impact of the National Programme for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities and to measure the progress made in integrating all children with disabilities into mainstream education in the absence of a timeline for achieving those objectives. The Committee would also appreciate an update on the progress made in deinstitutionalizing children with disabilities and transferring them to family or family-type environments.

55. She would like to know what measures the State party had taken to address the reported shortage of medical practitioners in rural areas, to ensure that Roma women and children were not subject to segregation in health-care facilities, to prevent the spread of tuberculosis and syphilis within the Roma community, to expand access to health care for Roma children, to combat malnutrition in that population group and to improve the general standard of living in Roma settlements. She would also be interested to know whether the National Roma Inclusion Strategy included a specific objective for the integration of Roma children into mainstream education and, if so, what progress had been achieved in that regard. She asked whether the State party had drawn up a timeline for the implementation of the amended School Act, what measures it had taken to raise the enrolment and reduce the dropout rate of Roma children at all levels of the education system and whether school curricula included a component on the culture of minority groups. More generally, what steps had the State party taken to ensure that the aims of education set out in article 29 of the Convention were duly reflected in school curricula and training for teachers? Were human rights issues a compulsory component of school curricula?

56. She invited the delegation to comment on reports that Roma children from disadvantaged backgrounds were often forced to complete an additional year of study at the primary level. Did schools promote tolerance for different ethnic and religious groups through their curricular and extracurricular activities? How did the State party guarantee children from disadvantaged backgrounds access to preschool education? Did the amended School Act address the persistent segregation of the Roma in the Slovak education system? She would like to know whether children who had been diagnosed with a mild disability at the time of their initial assessment upon entering the education system were subject to compulsory follow-up assessments to monitor their progress. The Committee had received information to the effect that the Slovak education system catered first and foremost to the needs of the brightest students, often to the detriment of students who failed to reach the same level of academic achievement. She would welcome the delegation's comments on that observation.

57. She wondered whether, in the view of the State party, adequate budgetary resources were allocated to ensure that cultural activities were accessible to all children, including

children living in rural areas, children with disabilities and children belonging to ethnic minorities. She also wished to know whether the State party routinely assessed the status of leisure facilities, how it took account of the cultural and linguistic diversity of children from different backgrounds in organizing leisure activities and whether it intended to address the decline in the number of children's television and radio programmes.

58. **Ms. Winter** asked how many children lived with their mothers in prison, whether special arrangements were put in place for children obliged to live in that situation, how the State party protected the children of incarcerated parents from discrimination and whether children could visit their incarcerated parents at any time and in conditions of safety and dignity.

59. She also wished to know whether the State party planned to adopt a formal procedure for dealing with stateless children. Had it investigated reports pointing to the frequent disappearance of unaccompanied minors from shelters? She wondered whether border police were trained to identify children who had been involved in armed conflict and whether child migrants were routinely placed in closed facilities along with their parents.

60. It would be useful to receive statistics on the number of cases of sexual abuse reported by hospitals and individual medical practitioners and the number of cases that had been investigated. She asked whether victims of human trafficking had access to safe accommodation and dependable referral mechanisms; how many cases of human trafficking had been investigated; and how many traffickers had been prosecuted. Would the State party consider offering additional training on how to deal with child offenders, victims and witnesses to police, prosecutors and judges in the future? What legal safeguards were in place to protect child witnesses before, during and after court proceedings? The Committee would like to know whether the State party intended to prohibit the interrogation of children in the absence of a parent or guardian, lawyer or other person of trust.

61. **Mr. Rodríguez Reyes** asked what percentage of urban and rural hospitals had been certified as child-friendly and had implemented the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding published by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO). The Committee had been informed that the State party adhered to only a limited number of the provisions of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes. He would like to know whether the State party could consider reviewing its current practices and adhering to the Code in its entirety. Information would also be welcome on how it protected mothers from the negative influence of advertisements for breast-milk substitutes and of sales representatives who provided free samples of such products in clinics and hospitals. What public policies had been put in place to promote breastfeeding? Did hospitals and clinics employ breastfeeding consultants who could lend support to new mothers?

62. **Ms. Muhamad Shariff** asked whether adolescents, including those belonging to the Roma community, had access to confidential and child-friendly sexual and reproductive health-care services; whether the State party had assessed the impact of the national programme for the care of children and adolescents for the period 2008-2015; and whether it collected data on different areas of adolescent health.

*The meeting rose at 6 p.m.*